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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/UK, Syria/China, Lebanon,
Palestinian dialogue, Iran, Kabul unrest (6/1)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers continued to report on Foreign Minister Walid al-Mouallem's visit to China, featuring his meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao. Earlier, President Hu Jintao opened the second ministerial meeting of the Arab-Chinese Cooperation Forum in the presence of Foreign Minister Mouallem. In an opening speech, the Chinese President said that his country will continue supporting just Arab causes, stressing the importance of boosting cooperation and friendship between China and Arab countries. Minister Mouallem also met directors of strategic research centers and chiefs of some Chinese mass media, in addition to the Arab-Chinese Friendship Association, at the Syrian Chancery in Beijing. During the meeting, the Minister briefed the Chinese side on the situation in the Middle East and Syria's stance regarding regional and international issues, in addition to bilateral relations between Syria and China. In a similar meeting with the Syrian community in Beijing, Minister Mouallem presented an explanation of Syrian foreign policy. Later, the Minister said in a speech to the Chinese official "People's" Daily that Syria and China maintain strong relations, adding that these relations have achieved great progress in recent years, particularly after President Asad's visit to China. "My visit to China aims at deepening the political dialogue and boosting bilateral relations in all fields," Mr. Mouallem added. On the Middle East issue, the Foreign Minister criticized Israel's rejection of the Arab peace initiative of Beirut: "Israel, through its aggressive policy, supported by its ally the US, obstructs the peace process in the Middle East." On Iraq, the Foreign Minister underlined that "Syria backs the political process in Iraq. Syria has begun contacts with the Iraqi side to resume diplomatic relations with it.... Syria will support Iraq to achieve security and stability and reach a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign forces from its lands...."

Papers also reported the visit to Damascus by Richard Spring, Member of the British House of Commons and Member of the British-Syrian Association, citing his meeting with Vice President Farouk al-Shara that addressed the latest regional and international developments and bilateral relations between Syria and the United Kingdom. Mr. Shara expressed appreciation for efforts of the British-Syrian Association to clarify the real

situation in the region and to create cultural interaction and understanding between Arabs and Europeans.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Al-Shara discusses current regional developments and bilateral relations with British MP Richard Spring. Shara hails efforts made by the British-Syrian Association" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 6/1)

"Chinese President receives al-Mouallem. Jintao confirms: We support Arab issues whatever the developments are. Al-Mouallem: We have a deep-rooted relationship with China" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 6/1)

"Political, intellectual, religious, cultural and judicial personalities condemn and reject the Damascus-Beirut Declaration, indicating that it converges with the US agenda and ignores the Israeli factor, which has committed the ugliest crimes in Lebanon" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/1)

"A dramatic shift in the US position: Washington is ready for direct negotiations with Iran" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/1)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"When Olmert Asks for the Implementation of Resolution 1559"

Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (6/1): "Those who watched recent developments in the south against the background of the open Israeli aggression from Al-Naqurah to Shab'a, which came two days after the criminal assassination of martyrs Mahmud and Nidal al-Majdhub in Sidon, were surprised to see Israel, which bombed and destroyed areas and killed innocent people, threaten to file a complaint with the Security Council. Why? Because Israel wanted to convey the message of a small group of people who are more concerned with Israeli affairs than the affairs of their own country, Lebanon. This message says: Lebanon should speed up the implementation of Resolution 1559 and disarm all 'the Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias!' This is what the Israeli officials demanded that Lebanon do after the ceasefire. Otherwise, as Olmert threatened, Lebanon will receive a painful strike!"

"Who stands to gain from disarming the resistance? And don't the Israeli aggressions constitute a clear message to all those who wager on the American role in the region?

"Why is Israel interested in the implementation of one particular Security Council resolution -- 1559 -- when it ignores more than 40 resolutions against it?

"This interest, undoubtedly, reflects the attempt by some Lebanese to open fire on the defense strategy of the resistance. These Lebanese believe that sovereignty will be complete only when the Israeli-American plan succeeds and Lebanon moves backward to the time when Israeli coordinator Yuri Lubrani moved freely in the country. The aim is to facilitate the Israeli excuses and plan, which seek to distract the Lebanese from the real conflict with the enemy and consolidate the theory that Israel is not an enemy."

"But those who listen to the Lebanese nationalist voices, which were raised stressing that the resistance will not be harmed and that it will receive full support to confront the Israeli aggression, remain optimistic that Lebanon will not be led to positions that the United States and its ally want the country to be led to, and that those who want to take revenge against Lebanon's Arabism will not be given a chance."

"For a Successful Palestinian Dialogue"

Adnan Ali, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, warned against the grave repercussions of the rising tension between Fatah and HAMAS. Ali said (6/1): "The attractive slogans about national unity and the prohibition of Palestinian bloodshed need to be translated into action.... All forces should match their words with actions and show responsibility in these difficult circumstances, where Israeli is working persistently to turn its plans on unilateral disengagement and the annexation of large West Bank areas into facts on the ground....

"Making the Palestinian national dialogue, which was launched a few days ago, a success is a sacred mission that all factions, particularly HAMAS and Fatah, must shoulder....

"The Palestinian people will ultimately call to account all those who fail to realize this fact."

"No One to Answer"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (6/1): "Has our European neighbor not heard the sound of warplanes and the explosion of bombs of all calibers as they fall over the heads of the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip? Have American and European eyes not seen the

tragedies of the Palestinian people, who are starving under the yoke of a conspiratorial siege in which countries claiming to be civilized and defenders of human right participate?

"Why did Europe and the United States remain silent when Israeli aircraft bombed Lebanon's Al-Biq'a region and southern towns and villages and when the Israeli Mosad assassinated two Lebanese citizens in Sidon? Where are the advocates of Lebanon's sovereignty, independence, and freedom, who have let no opportunity slip to talk about what they called 'Syrian interference' in Lebanon?

"In the eyes of the West, which yearns for the time of colonialism, Israel's aggression and terrorism is condoned as self defense, while every domestic measure an Arab country takes to protect its national unity, sovereignty, and freedom is called a violation of human rights....

"There is no point complaining because this is the nature of the colonialist West, which planted Israel six decades ago."

"Bush: Mission and Task"

Hanan Hamad, a columnist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (6/1): "The Afghan uprising in Kabul on May 29 and the American reaction showed that the Bush administration and those who work under its umbrella in Afghanistan have lost not only direction but also the objective and the compass....

"The road accident in Kabul was the straw that broke the camel's back.... The Afghani coercion exploded in the face of the occupier and the government it sponsors, and Afghans declared their categorical rejection of the American and European presence on their land and loudly protested their government's failure to bring the promised peace and stability....

"The incidents also showed the falsehood of the American claim that the Americans went to Afghanistan to save the Afghan people...."

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